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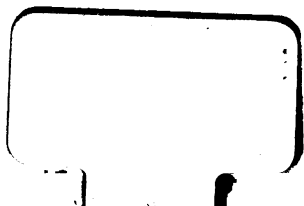
PRICE SIXPENCE.

A WORD
TO A
YOUNG GOVERNESS:
By AN OLD ONE.

London: A. M. Bennett, Bishopsgate Without.

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1860.



A WORD,

&c., &c.

WHEN I first, some sixteen years ago, was introduced to a school-room, with four dear children, whom I was to teach as I thought best, I should have been not only interested, but helped, by such suggestions as I mean to take courage now to put down. The subject is boundless; all is not said that there is to say; and, though there are many speakers and writers at whose feet I would gladly sit to learn from them, yet, perhaps, the very simplicity of what is in my mind to write,

may leave me a place to fill up still unoccupied by them.

I imagine you, then, (and I am sure I feel a hearty sympathy with you,) entering on your new post, with a strong feeling of interest in the plans you are about to form, and with sufficient liveliness of mind not to be content with shaping them, as the first resource that occurs to you, after the pattern of the school you have yourself just left.

I am not going to write a treatise on education. I have not ability for that. My aim is, only, to say a few simple things to a person in the condition in which I recollect myself to have been.

First. Ask of God to give you the mind that was in Christ. So to fill your heart with His love, that your whole spirit and manner may breathe the sweetness of it, and that you may be honoured to win your dear pupils to the Cross. To give you special patience and good temper, for you may be sure you will have special

need of them ; and, besides this, graciously to bless your endeavours to acquire that without which you cannot be successful, and which may be made matter of acquirement—something of that happy manner by which we bring our influence to bear on our fellow-creatures without *friction*.

Then, go and buy Isaac Taylor's "Home Education," and Abbott's "Teacher." Do not read them and put them away, but have them always at hand. Talk to successful teachers, ask them questions, no matter how simple, about their management. *You will always find the most successful ready to acknowledge that they themselves are always learning*, and that, too, sometimes by their own mistakes. But do not copy the plans, or receive the counsel of any, whose pupils are not *happy*, as well as intelligent.

Gain access to all the school-rooms you can ; good or bad, you will learn from them all ; you will see, in all their

varieties, the manners to be cultivated, and the manners to be avoided. You will soon find that it is not sufficient to resolve, that kindness and firmness shall be blended in your conduct; that you will have no favourites; that you will neither adopt the style of artificial dignity, conventionally called "a school-mistress manner," distancing the hearts of the little ones the first time they speak to you; nor a behaviour so frivolous, as to destroy their respect;—it is not enough that you make all these determinations. You must notice teachers who are obeyed as you wish to be obeyed; loved, as you wish to be loved. Some morning, when the spirit of your school-room has been, to an unusual degree, of that serenely cheerful nature most favourable both to moral and intellectual progress, consider what part *you* have had in producing it, and how you can best promote it in future. And when it is otherwise, go as soon as you can, and walk out in the fresh air;

and when your head has done aching (not before, or you will see all things through a yellow glass), recal the state in which *you* began the morning's work. Were you well? and cheerful? and ready to see everything in the pleasantest light in which it could truthfully be seen?

The next thing we would say to you is, *Give up entirely the expectation that you will ever see your pupils perfect.* If you are too eager; if (to use a phrase, more expressive than refined) you are ~~always~~ *always* at them about one thing or other; if, whilst they are rewarding the pains you take to interest them by the glowing looks with which they listen to you, you break off, and throw a damp on the whole, by stopping to correct some unfortunate elbow which is, probably, just in the position which an artist would choose for it, and in which papa and mamma sit every day; then, farewell to your success. This exercise of authority about every trifle, "is like shooting butterflies with cannon-

balls," as one said to me, whose views of education Pestalozzi declared, of all he had met with in England, most nearly to reach his ideal. If you will bring out your cannon continually, you must be content with butterflies. When an important occasion arises, you cannot meet it, for you have nothing heavier than what you have used before.

But, though you need not spoil a lesson, or draw a tear, about the "mint, anise, and cummin," you should not neglect them altogether. Keep your own elbows off the table; and speak occasionally, in a pleasant way, of such matters. You may *win* your pupils to a good deportment; but, if you try to *drive* them to it, you will but confirm opposition. Too sadly may this be seen in some homes, where a daughter's precious love is frittered away, without, after all, accomplishing the *ladyism* for which the priceless treasure has been sacrificed.

I was only a few years old, in my own teach-

ing career, when I heard the observation made, with reference to a particular school, "And they get as much as possible out of the boys, I suppose?" "Before they do that," was the reply, "they *put what they can into them.*" This remark has often occurred to me, as illustrative of the natural order to be observed in the processes of education. The business of its first years should be, mainly, *putting in*; communicating facts, of which abundance exists, adapted to enrich the mind, without fatiguing it. Many things in which we instruct our children, have their chief value simply in this way; viz., by giving their minds, which are sure to work upon something, something interesting and sensible on which to work. Your young ladies will not be likely ever to have practical need for showing that "all the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles;" yet it is not possible they can study the proposition, provided they do so with pleasure, without being improved by it. In the same way,

they are not to talk Latin; nor do they learn it for the mere power, taken by itself, of reading Latin books. What would be the chances of practical inconvenience to your pupil, if she did not learn German, or even French? She could not show off her knowledge, or charitably use it, in assisting French beggars; and, when abroad, she could not ask for well-aired sheets. But it would certainly not be worth while to spend the time which a tolerable command of French requires, for the sake of meeting such deficiencies as these. The most valuable part of the study of language, is not its applicability to the necessities of life. Get such a book as "Trench on Words," and if you cannot, with its help, awaken some taste for the subject on its own account, you had better leave it to those whom Nature has made capable of enjoying it.

But there are other occupations which have, or ought to have, directly, as the others have remotely, for their object,

qualification for the duties of life. Now this is the next thing we have to say to you, as we could wish some one had long ago whispered it in our own ear, "Teach the children to do, to use, and to understand, those things which they will want to do, use, and understand, when they leave your care." Teach them what you have felt the want of; what you have felt the benefit of. It is easy to say, "Education should be made practical;" but we will come, a little more in detail, to what we mean.

We will suppose, then, that while your pupils' attention is fresh, near the beginning of the morning, you have a lesson in

Arithmetic.—Ask Miss Louisa, who brought home that showy ciphering-book last half-year, with "Simple Proportion," "Double Proportion," "Decimal Fractions," so beautifully printed in German text, or old English,—ask her whether she can write out a grocer's or a draper's bill? Whether she knows

the meaning of a post-office order, or a cheque? Whether she can calculate,—supposing her new dress takes fourteen yards of silk three-quarters wide,—how much she must buy of a silk only half-a-yard wide? Whether she can reckon, without the slate—nay, in the shop, and by the time it is measured off—five and a-half yards of ribbon, at ninepence half-penny, and how much change out of five shillings? Many Miss Louisas cannot do these things, after years spent at lessons, for the simple reason that they are not regularly exercised in them. Why should not children, in their first, or soon after their first lessons, see and handle pence, shillings, and half-crowns (which will be as pleasant as it is useful to them), till they are familiar with their respective values? Do they not perform slate calculations, on purpose that they may be able to manage these very pence, shillings, and half-crowns? “Oh, but that will all come to them, when they have to keep house.”

By your leave, it does *not* always come to them. We have observed the young lady-wife in the market, paying what was asked, evidently confused, and unable to tell whether she was cheated or not.

Now, under this head, we may observe :—Let not your pupils be among those grown persons who have no distinct method of reckoning the day of the month. Do not think, an almanac is not a school-book, and, therefore, has no business in your school-room. Have one there. Explain, that if the month comes in on Monday, for example, the Mondays for that month will be the 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, and 29th ; that, these figures once fixed in the mind, every day can be readily reckoned from them. As each season comes round, accustom them to notice, and calculate, the constantly varying lengths of day and night (under another head we shall perhaps say, explain the cause of this variation, in the most familiar manner possible), and to understand why Christ-

mas, &c., is so called. Do not think your school will suffer by an occasional interruption of the routine you may have laid down; you will find things will be all the brighter for it; and that a lesson about the shortest day, given on that very day, will have an interest beyond what it would have if occurring in a regular course. Will not *you* feel more interest? and when you are most interested, the children will be so.

Ask those young ladies, who have learnt the table-book over and over, to draw a line an inch or a foot long; or to measure, with the eye, the length of the sofa. These things do not come naturally, without practice; but they do come very readily *with* practice. Now, do resolve, that when your pupils leave you, and take up a yard measure, it shall not be a thing they have never handled before, and scarcely know the meaning of; that, when they go to the warehouse to buy furniture for the new parlour, they shall be able, with an ap-

proach to accuracy, to estimate the relative sizes of the articles, and the spaces they will occupy.

Geography.—Children (aye, and one might say, young people) have come under our notice, who have gone through and through their geography-book, and have no tolerable idea of what is meant by North, South, East, and West. Should it be twelve o'clock, and the sun shining into the room, they cannot tell you which way the windows look; they do not know whether their own home is east or west of the school, north or south of the river. They have no idea in what direction I must ride to reach Greenside, or Sunny Hollow, or even London. They can, *perhaps*, tell you that Ekaterinoslav, Tchetchentzi, and such edifying names, are provinces of the Russian empire; and we *do not despise* this knowledge. The grapes are not sour; and we want to preserve the idea through this little book, that what we seem to depreciate, we speak

of as *comparatively* unimportant. Let the child learn, pointing in the direction of the objects, the position of the Cathedral, the Market-place, Beechcrown Hill, and Hamilton Castle; then, transferring them to the slate, very roughly at first, he will gain an idea of the meaning of a map. The villages of his own neighbourhood, the towns of his own county, will naturally follow. This is a knowledge which, whether in business, or with intelligent friends in the drawing-room, is almost sure to be brought into requisition; the other places he may never hear of again.

We must dwell a little longer on maps. How often is the scale of miles in the corner passed over without explanation! "Papa goes from Lincoln to Hertford to-day; how many miles will he travel? Can you take the map and find out?" Not one of the little company knows how; nor understands why the length of my nail means fifty miles on one map, and five miles on another. Yet, this will be readily under-

stood, after two or three plain experiments, by a child of nine years old; and a little additional practice will give a valuable power of measuring by the eye.

What a sad puzzle are the lines of longitude to many a pupil! Somehow they help him to find a place; but of their connexion with actual facts he catches nothing. "While we have been this hour in school, the earth has been whirling round, and has brought us—what part of its whole circumference, toward the sun?" None in the class can tell; but if you show them, with the globe, that as the one spinning round occupies twenty-four hours, one hour must accomplish a twenty-fourth part of that spinning, they will take great pleasure in calculating the difference of time in different parts of the world, and will understand how an electric message arrives at New York before it was sent from London.

History.—"What celebrated dramatic

writers flourished at Athens in the sixth epocha?"

"Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides."

Very good ; but now, what do you know of the history of Bath? Can you tell me of any great men who lived here, near your own time? Do you know that you pass every day the house, No. 13, New King Street, where Herschell stood at the door, and first pointed out the new planet to one of his friends? Did you ever think why Bath was called Bath? Have you learnt that the Romans called it "The Waters of the Sun," and the Saxons "The City of aching Men," *i.e.*, invalids? Have you ever observed the Roman baths? or understood the motto over the Pump Room? or been to the Museum, and seen the remains of Minerva's temple, and other antiquities, said to be the most numerous and curious which have been found in any place in England? Do you know anything about Ralph Allen, or Beckford? Have you ever heard that

Widcombe means *wide valley*, and *Hetling* House, the house near the hot spring? Have you ever looked, in the Borough Walls, at the piece of the old wall left; and at the back of the Orange Grove, for very observable traces of the same? A little farther on, behind the market, for the only one of the City gates, the east gate (the only one, too, which has not a street named after it), which is left? Do you know anything about the Bath stone, or the Bath water? No? well, these things are, at least, *as* interesting, as useful, and as enriching to the mind, as the dark gleams (if such an expression can be pardoned us) shooting across two or three thousand years from the old Greeks.

The real uses of history are often better attained from minute detail, than from succinct narratives. The lives of Maria Antoinette, Mary Queen of Scots, Charles V., &c., read with you, conversed upon, and thought about, without too much task-making, will do more to enrich and

improve your pupil's mind, than the convenient little catechisms so adapted to make her shine at an examination. On such an occasion, the child well *got up* in names and dates, will quite put to the blush her really cultivated companion, whose information, instead of existing in her head, quite separate from all her thoughts and feelings, gradually becomes apparent to you in the general intelligence of her conversation.

Writing.—"I gained the first prize for writing at school," we heard a gentleman say the other day; "and I did very well with large, and text, and the other hands in the copy-books; but when I left school, and came to running hand, O! it was terrible!" The difficulty, we ought to say, had been overcome, as it no doubt always soon would be, after the hand had been well disciplined in writing formal copies. But why should not the difficulty be overcome before the pupil leaves school? Formal copies are not the ultimate object of his

learning to write; they only afford the discipline preparatory to that ultimate object, which is—the mastership of a *distinct, rapid, and handsome* handwriting. This he will require continually, but slow, formal writing, such as he puts in his copy-book, hardly twice a year. Let him see the master sit down, and write, in five minutes, a note, or a bill, possessing the above three qualities; he will be animated with a desire to produce such another; and before long, his fingers will learn to second his will. Indeed, the danger is, that hands as yet too unformed, will aim to do the same as older ones; and it is true of writing, as of most other things, that what we would ultimately do *quickly* and well, we must first submit to do *slowly* and well.

. Show your pupils different styles of current hand, each really good of its kind, and allow them a degree of liberty in forming their own.

. *Drawing* seems naturally to succeed

another imitative art ; it is, however, one of a far higher order, as regards the mental powers which it exercises ; judgment, taste, memory, and imagination. But, with all its uses, and all its delights, be not tempted to let it encroach on the regular due proportion of time which must be given to the actual necessities of reading, spelling, writing, and calculating *well*.

Some parents suppose that their children must be endowed with a peculiar talent for it, in order to respectable success in drawing. Such is not the opinion of Harding, whose "Lessons on Art" would do you good, whether you draw yourself or not ; neither does he direct you to "look at Nature through the works of the old masters," as does a motto we lately saw inscribed on an Exhibition Catalogue. No ; but he shows you, that with ordinary powers of mind and of hand, any one may, by a patient making use of the knowledge of those who have gone before

him, come to represent Nature faithfully and agreeably, in less time than is ordinarily sacrificed to "highly-finished" copyings. You will find a certain amount of copying needful, as indicated in such a work as I have named; but, as soon as practicable, let your pupils taste the sweets of actually drawing the cup, the box, the table, the open door, the row of windows, all retiring in beautiful perspective. How delightful, too, for you and for them, the summer evening walk, with camp-stool and drawing-frame (preferable to a sketch-book), to draw the picturesque gable or porch which attracted your eye the day before, and secure all those lovely varieties of shadow before the sun goes down, as go down it will to your surprise, for time passes quickly in the open air with your attention in any way fixed on Nature. Your pupils will remember those summer evenings as long as they live, and they cannot fail to catch some of your enthusiasm, if it is expressed with perfect ease and natural-

ness. And they will (or they ought to) thank you, too, in after years, when they walk even along the London streets, and find their susceptibilities of pleasure enlarged by the habit of noticing picturesque effect. A projecting moulding, perhaps, which the young lady copyist, accustomed to spend hours in working the corner of a square-cut pencil on paper of a satin smoothness, has never learnt to observe, will burst on them with gladdening beauty; and as the sunshine slants across it, they will long for paper and pencil, that they might, in a few minutes, bring it out, with something of the proper character, as they used to do with dear Miss ——.

You will be surprised, if you have never tried it, to find how soon children without any “particular genius” will learn to sketch any simple object around them. Let all take slates together (yourself included), and draw any object that may happen to be in the room. Then try

mamma's wardrobe, or anything in another part of the house; see who can best recollect how many drawers it has, and what would be its appearance, viewed in front, sideways, &c. These drawings from memory give excellent practice, and should always be tested by a visit to the object.

Encouragement is important to the early attempt.

Now, after such training as this, a lady will be able to copy a chair, the pattern of which she wants to show the upholsterer, or to let him see on paper how her sofa is to be made.

Reading—in a manner neither tame nor pompous; neither too low nor too loud; feelingly, yet without affectation—is perhaps not as common as good pianoforte playing; yet it is certainly more important, and could be acquired in less time, where the necessary intelligence is possessed. Nobody can read impressively what he does not comprehend and feel.

Children in a large class are often ashamed and afraid of reading with expression; they do not like it to be supposed that they are touched by the subject. This is much less felt in the home circle, or in a company small enough to resemble one.

The Scriptures should be read rather more slowly than another book. The effect of hearing them is amazingly different, according as they are well or ill read; a point of no small consequence in families where they are read aloud as regularly as they ought to be.

If your pupils have been suffered to fall into the miserable, monotonous, see-saw style so prevalent in some quarters, few things will try your and their patience more than the war which you must carry on against it. The evil cannot be cured at once; and it will require every kind, although a spirited manner, of pointing out the difference between a reading that *makes* you attend, and a reading that requires a constant effort to attend to it.

Spelling, to some children, and often to very clever children, is an extreme difficulty. Unless they have a special aptitude for it, how can it be otherwise to learners of English? In German, the words are spelt as they are pronounced; you know at once what to call a word you have never seen before. But how one pities the little English four-years-old, who, having just learnt *s, o, so*, innocently concludes that *t, o*, must spell a word rhyming to it!

The main practical use of spelling is to enable one to write words correctly. Every variety of exercise, therefore, in which a child learns how to spell a word by writing it, is more like the use he will make of that word in after life, than those exercises in which he spells the word without seeing or writing it. Mere copying is excellent practice for little children, or bad spellers; or to learn a verse, and write it from memory. And in this way they have the words in the natural proportion in which they come

into use, which cannot be said of the artificial columns of the spelling book.

Those who have a taste for language will generally spell correctly, by a sort of intuition; and, in cases of doubt, they will go to the fountain head, the original source of the word. An acquaintance with English alone would leave you uncertain whether to write *dependent* or *dependant*; but even a slight knowledge of Latin fixes the former in your mind. A school-boy told me that he could never recollect how to spell *parallel* till his teacher explained to him that it was from the Greek *par'allelōs*, *like another*. Not that the principal advantage of learning other languages is to be able to spell one's own; any person who thought so, would show such ignorance of the peculiar richness which this study, properly carried on, gives to a mind endowed for it by nature, that it would be useless to waste words over the matter. As we have before hinted, some minds, well adapted, it may

be, to excel in other pursuits, will never make much of language; will neither enjoy it, nor profit by it. Be content, then, with making such pupils correct spellers, though they care nothing for derivation; and sufficiently good composers, to write with readiness and simplicity on any ordinary subject, though they do not relish with you the beauties of your favourite authors.

No child will excel in everything; and, while each must be instructed in certain necessary things, a range is yet left within which it is wise to fall in with Nature; to guide, whilst you encourage, her manifest tendencies.

Miscellaneous. — Under this head we would recommend your seizing every opportunity, be it only a few minutes' remarks, incidentally made, of acquainting the children with what Nature—that is, our heavenly Father—is doing all round them, somewhat in preference to what man is doing. The steam-engine is admirable, and ought to be studied; but, with all its

noisy machinery, it is not so admirable, nor so worthy to be studied, as the grand condensing apparatus which nightly covers every plant with its own special requirements of dew. The science (or art) of Photography is beautiful, but the most beautiful part of it is not the human.

You should break up the first difficulties for your young people, on many subjects which perhaps you cannot pursue further. Take botany, for example. The pupils cannot spare two or three hours a week to it, and they are yet too young to encounter all the formidable *andrias* and *gynias*; but carry a primrose or a dandelion into the school-room, once in a while, and employ an odd quarter of an hour in a very familiar lecture upon it; show, with or without the help of such a book as Lindley's "Ladies' Botany," the formation and perfect arrangement of each part. They will wonder to hear that the daisy, which they always considered as a single flower, is in reality a head of flowers; and will

delight to see (with the glass, if needful,) how those round the edge are a sort of half flower, with one petal ; that the florets of the dandelion are all of this kind ; and those of the groundsel, again, all little complete cups, like those in the centre of the daisy.

We have known girls of thirteen, who had attended school for years, unable to answer the question, " What makes day ?" And when it was varied, so as to leave no possibility of mistake, evidently not knowing what it is which happens every twenty-four hours, causing us to have first light, and then darkness. After living through a hundred and fifty changes of the moon, they had never been told (or never understood) why it is of a different shape every night of the month from the night before, though this might have been explained in five minutes with a ball and candle.

Now, I would, really, rather my daughter could not say "*Comment vous portez-vous ?*" (if the alternative came to it), than that

she should not know such things as these.

And these things, if not taught in too difficult a way, will be taken in and retained by the children in a manner in which *you* would not take in and retain a new fact. They surpass you in power of memory, as you do them in power of reason, and generalization, and reflection. These latter powers are feeble in childhood, and it is as cruel to force them forward, as it is ruinous to their ultimate vigour. But all the world is still fresh to them; they have not the cares, nor are their minds in the stage of middle life; and Nature plainly says, up to fourteen at least,—“Feed me with all useful and interesting facts; but ask me not yet to arrange them philosophically, to draw inferences, or to trace long-connected conclusions.”

It is a plain fact, that *viande* is French for *meat*; no reasoning is required in learning that. But to determine whether

a certain word should be classed as a preposition or an adverb, does require an effort of reasoning, an effort impossible to many children of whom it is asked. On many such questions, learned men, who make them a principal study, are divided in opinion; how unfit, then, must they be to occupy the tender powers of children! I believe it is a growing opinion among experienced teachers, that grammar is too abstract a study for early education. I know, at least, one instance in which it was not taken up by the pupil till fourteen or fifteen; she then brought to it a mind able to understand it, and went through every rule and note of *Murray*, not only with ease, but with delight. This is more than can be said of many sorrowing little creatures, whose tears fall over pages so full of what is interesting and excellent; and which they might see to be so at a later stage, but which they are now merely learning to dislike for ever. How much better would their time be employed over

such charming books as "Near Home," and "Far Off!"

Once for all,—Prayer, Love, Hope, Patience. Willing to teach, be as willing to learn. Jealous over yourself, have, at the same time, a proper confidence in yourself. Teach—what is necessary, first; what is useful, next; what is ornamental, last. Do all you can by *influence*. Expect not, as you exhibit not, perfection. And surely you shall see a reward to your labour.

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